

MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
MARCH 21, 1962

The Commission met, pursuant to notice at 9:30 a.m., with David E. Finley, Chairman, presiding.

Present were: David E. Finley
Douglas W. Orr
William G. Perry
Ralph Walker

Charles H. Atherton, Asst. Secretary
C.L. Martin, Counsel
Susan E. Bennett, Admin. Secretary
Gilbert Halasz, Recorder

I. SUBMISSIONS

1. Smithsonian Institution and District of Columbia Government
Department of Buildings and Grounds

National Zoological Park, Master Plan for Redevelopment

The Commission conferred with Mr. James Bradley, Dr. A. Remington Kellog of the Smithsonian Institution and Dr. Theodore H. Reed, Director of the Zoological Park, on a Master Plan for the redevelopment of the Park.

Mr. Bradley outlined for the members some of the history of the Zoo and the problems which the proposed Master Plan would attempt to solve. He pointed out that the principal objectives of the improvement plan were first, to improve the display of animals by replacing the barred and fenced cages with more open, natural surroundings and second, to separate and establish well-defined paths of circulation for pedestrians and automobiles. An important phase of the latter would be the construction of a vehicular road bypassing the Zoo to eliminate north-south commuter traffic through the display area. Mr. Bradley also reported that the Congress had already authorized the necessary funds for the National Park Service to begin construction of a tunnel as part of the bypass road. He also showed a proposed realignment of the east-west road running from Harvard Street to Connecticut Avenue, that would avoid the central display area. Plans for a system of parking areas located on the fringes of the zoo grounds, away from the central area, were also shown and favorably received.

Mr. Bradley showed the members which of the existing buildings would be preserved, the location of proposed new buildings, and examples of the method of separating the animals and spectators through the use of water filled moats and open ditches. The members favored the removal of the distracting fences, and other similar means of separation, and agreed that the increased visibility of the animals, in combination with the deemphasis on man made or artificial elements in the background, would add to the

pleasure of visiting the Zoo.

The Commission members approved the Master Plan and added they hoped the plans would soon be realized for much needed improvements to an important public facility.

The Secretary was directed to prepare a letter for the Chairman's signature stating the Commission's views. EXHIBIT A

2. General Services Administration (Public Buildings Service) and Smithsonian Institution

National Portrait Gallery-Proposed Remodeling of Old Patent Office Building

The Commission conferred with Mr. J. Rowland Snyder, Director of the Architectural and Structural Division, Public Buildings Service, Mr. James Bradley, Assistant Secretary, Smithsonian Institution, and Mr. Waldron Faulkner, architect, of the firm of Faulkner, Kingsbury and Stenhouse, on a proposed program of remodeling of the Old Patent Office Building located between F and G Streets, N.W. and Seventh to Ninth Streets, N.W. The building when remodeled will serve as the National Portrait Gallery, and also house the National Collection of Fine Arts.

Mr. Faulkner explained that the remodeling plan contemplated only changes which were deemed essential to make the building function as an art gallery or were required by safety regulations, and would not affect the exterior appearance materially. Drawings and sketches of proposed changes were explained by Mr. Faulkner.

The members discussed at some length the location of a series of exterior steps leading from a fire exit on the southwest wing of the building to F Street. The steps would provide access to the street level across a sloped terrace. The members asked if there were no alternative methods of providing a fire exit other than the extensive flight of steps which they thought were conspicuous and detracted from the appearance of the building. Mr. Faulkner replied that an alternative would be to locate the steps and walkway immediately adjacent to the main entrance to the building thus subordinating their prominence in relation to the original features of the elevation. The members preferred this location and recommended that the drawings be revised accordingly.

Mr. Faulkner showed the design of a proposed truck ramp to be located under the portico on the G Street entrance to the building. After examining the plans and a sketch of the proposed ramp the members said that they thought that the ramp would have no adverse effect upon the appearance of the building.

Mr. Faulkner explained a plan to remodel an exterior courtyard for use as an outdoor sculptural gallery. The courtyard now contains two large elm trees, two cast iron fountains and areas of grass. The proposed plan

would maintain the existing pathways but replace the grass with stone paving material. The members were of the opinion that because of the large area of the courtyard a study should be made to incorporate additional landscaping elements and possibly changes in elevation in order to achieve a more appropriate scale for the display of sculpture.

There was a general discussion of the plans for remodeling the interior of the building. The members were shown drawings of typical rooms as remodeled for gallery display purposes, also plans to remodel a room on the third floor as a multi-purpose auditorium. The members thought the remodeling scheme was practical and showed a well-considered respect for the original architecture.

The Secretary was directed to prepare a letter expressing the Commission's views. EXHIBIT B

II. DISCUSSION

Budget Appropriation for Fiscal Year 1963 - Action by House of Representatives

The Chairman reported that the House of Representatives had passed an appropriation bill allotting the Commission \$70,000 for Fiscal Year 1963, or \$10,000 less than was requested. He said that he had appeared before the Senate Committee on Appropriations, and that later he had visited with Senator Hayden, Chairman of the Appropriations Committee and explained that the Commission needed the additional \$10,000 badly. Senator Hayden said that he hoped that the Committee would recommend it. Senator Hayden explained that if the Senate passed a bill with an \$80,000 appropriation for the Commission there would be a conference, and at that time the Commission should state the Commission's case for the additional sum. The Chairman reported that this would be done, and that a request for an amendment to the House bill had been prepared. No action was deemed necessary at the present time.

Thereafter, at 12:00 noon, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

C. L. Martin

C. L. Martin
Counsel

MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
21 March 1962

AM

9:30 1. CONVENE, ROOM 7000, INTERIOR DEPARTMENT BUILDING

2. SUBMISSIONS-REVIEWS-INTERVIEWS

9:35 a. Smithsonian Institution and D.C. Government (Department of Buildings and Grounds)

(Dr. Leonard Carmichael, Secretary, Smithsonian Institution; Mr. James Bradley, Assistant Secretary, Smithsonian Institution; Dr. Theodore Reed, Director, National Zoological Park; Mr. Richard Dimon, architect)

National Zoological Park, Proposed Master Plan

10:00 b. General Services Administration (Public Buildings Service) and Smithsonian Institution

(Mr. James Bradley, Assistant Secretary, Smithsonian Institution; Mr. J. Rowland Snyder, Director, Architectural and Structural Division, GSA, PBS; Mr. Waldron Faulkner, architect)

National Portrait Gallery - Proposed remodeling of Old Patent Office

23 March 1962

27 March 1962

Dear Doctor Carmichael:

The Commission of Fine Arts, at its meeting on March 21, 1962, met with Mr. James Bradley and Doctor A. Ruxington Kellogg of the Smithsonian Institution, and Doctor Theodore H. Reed, Director of the National Zoological Park, to discuss a Master Development Plan for the Washington D. C. Zoological Park.

The general objectives of the plan were described to the members of the Commission, and drawings, maps, and so forth, illustrating the physical changes to the Park contemplated in the plan were shown.

The members' reactions were entirely favorable, particularly in regard to the program of improvements which will exclude automobiles from the central area of the Zoo through the use of by-pass roads and fringe parking facilities. They also liked the proposed plans to display the birds and animals in natural settings and thereby eliminate iron-bar cages.

The members approved the plan in principle and commended the architects for their plan.

The Commission will be glad to consult with the Smithsonian Institution in the future on the design of new structures to be erected in the Zoological Park.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Sincerely yours,

David E. Finley
Chairman

Doctor Leonard Carmichael
Secretary
Smithsonian Institution
Washington 25, D.C.

27 March 1962

Dear Mr. Boutin:

The Commission of Fine Arts, at its meeting on March 20, 1962, considered plans for remodeling the Old Patent Office Building to provide space for a National Portrait Gallery and for the National Collection of Fine Arts.

Mr. Waldron Faulkner, architect, explained his plans for the remodeling and stated that it was the intention of the Smithsonian Institution and the General Services Administration to change the exterior of the old building as little as possible; and that the major interior renovations were being limited to conversion of offices to gallery spaces and provision for a lecture hall. He said that the building, as built from designs of Robert Mills in the first half of the 19th Century, would remain as a fine example of Greek Revival architecture. The members of the Commission expressed their agreement with the plans to effect only the most essential changes.

There were two changes of special concern to the Commission of Fine Arts: first, the new service entrance ramp on the G Street side, to provide off-street access to the building at basement level; and second, an emergency fire exit to F Street from a required stair tower that would cross the grass bank to the sidewalk.

The members of the Commission had no objection to the manner in which the building would be serviced by the new vehicular ramp facilities on the G Street side of the building, but felt that the series of steps extending from the stair tower down the grass bank to the sidewalk on F Street were too conspicuous, as presently conceived. After carefully considering a number of alternatives, it was recommended that a walk be constructed parallel to the face of the building leading from the exit door in the stair tower to the immediate left of the main entrance steps, where a more modest flight of steps could be constructed beside the existing stair wall.

Mr. Faulkner also showed a sketch of the proposed treatment of the interior courtyard, which, he said, the Smithsonian hoped could be used as an additional area for the display of sculpture.

The members of the Commission expressed some reservation about these plans. They thought such an extensive treatment with stone paving might tend to be overpowering considering the large size and scale of the courtyard. They recommended that when the program for the display of sculpture is more fully developed, the details of this design should be given further study, taking into consideration the use of additional planting, level changes, or other elements that might be appropriate for the display of sculpture.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Sincerely yours,

David E. Finley
Chairman

Honorable Bernard Boutin
Administrator
General Services Administration
Washington 25, D. C.

cc-Director, Arch. & Structural Division, FBS
Secretary, Smithsonian Institution

